



March 11, 2004

**Providence man pleads guilty to being
a felon in possession of a firearm;**

**Nirandone Sitthirath fled from a car and was arrested when he tried to
retrieve his car, which police had towed**

Nirandone Sitthirath, 26, of Providence, has pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm, admitting that he owned a handgun that was found under a mattress in his apartment in September. Providence Police were looking for Sitthirath after he had fled from a car.

The Office of the United States Attorney announced the guilty plea, which Sitthirath entered yesterday before U.S. District Court Judge Mary M. Lisi in U.S. District Court, Providence. Sitthirath, who was living at 57 Candace Street when he was arrested, is detained pending sentencing, which is scheduled for June 18.

At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Lee H. Vilker said that, had the case gone to trial, the government would have proven that Sitthirath, who has prior felony convictions, had a handgun hidden beneath his bed mattress on September 26, when Providence Police were looking for him.

At about 11:30 PM on September 26, Providence Police Detective Gregory Sion and Patrolman William Dwyer were on patrol in a cruiser when they saw a car stop suddenly in front of 160 Hanover Street. The driver and a passenger fled from the vehicle and the officers saw that

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both were holding large, dark objects that appeared to be guns. The passenger discarded a handgun, which the officers retrieved. However, the two men eluded the police.

The officers found Sitthirat's identification in the car and determined that the car was registered to him. They traced him to 137 Candace Street, where they found a loaded, 9 millimeter pistol hidden beneath a bed mattress. Sitthirath was not at home but police arrested him a few hours later when he went to the Providence Police station to retrieve his car, which the police had towed after he abandoned it.

Sitthirath admitted to police that the gun found under the mattress was his and said he had bought it for \$150 shortly after being released from prison. Sitthirath had been convicted on state charges of conspiracy and carrying a pistol without a license.

The statutory maximum penalty for being a felon in possession of a firearm is ten years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine. Federal sentencing is determined on the basis of guidelines that are based on such factors as the specific nature of an offense and a defendant's criminal background, if any.

Providence Police and the **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms** investigated the case. It is being prosecuted federally under a **Project Safe Neighborhoods** initiative in which firearms cases are jointly reviewed by the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office to determine where best to prosecute them. Project Safe Neighborhoods is a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes.